

Utah Joins a 5-State Energy Partnership



The Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS) has joined with major energy industry representatives from Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming and Colorado, workforce agencies, state economic developers, and educators from community colleges with energy training programs, to form a group calling itself Rocky Mountain Energy Partners. Steve Maas represents DWS on this 5-state group, which is sponsored by the American Petroleum Institute (API).



The group has formed in recognition that the current energy boom is going to be with us for a while and the Rocky Mountain area has energy resources which, with oil at its current price, are now profitable to extract. Issues surrounding workforce, training and infrastructure need to be planned for and responded to in a coordinated regional format. The resources exist in places with sparse populations and little infrastructure, and, with the current emphasis on becoming less dependent on foreign oil, there is added incentive to move forward with development. This group is meeting to deal with these and other issues:

- How can education providers in the region offer similar training so that industry is “buying” or hiring a similar

product in trained workers?

- How can industry most easily access the workforce system in each state/region?
- What are the most accurate projections industry can make for the next five years for new worker needs, and in what occupations/skill sets (soft projections have ranged from 4,000-10,000 new workers needed by 2010)?
- How can the industry present a better image to attract new workers?
- What do state and local leaders need to assist them in making informed decisions about infrastructure improvements and investments?

Sub-committees are now grappling with several major tasks. One group is working on collecting data on the industry’s workforce needs by state. Another is putting together an Energy Jobs Toolkit to better communicate to job seekers, educators, parents and planners the types of jobs available in the industry, their training, wages, etc. A third group is surveying educational resources to see what schools offer what types of training in energy, and where. The goal is to develop curriculum consistency throughout the region. Still another group is working on ensuring that industry access to workforce systems throughout the region meets their labor recruitment needs.

The group last met in Denver in April and will meet again in Casper, Wyoming on June 20. 